

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 15366 01 OF 02 011057Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/066 W

-----128854 011101Z /11

R 011026Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3832
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 15366

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UR
SUBJECT: RECENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 9531(NOTAL), (B) 77MOSCOW 5972(NOTAL),
(C) 77 MOSCOW 16219, (D) MOSCOW 1789(NOTAL),
(E) MOSCOW 2055

SUMMARY: KULAKOV APPEARED ON LENIN MAUSOLEUM JUNE 29
IN LOWEST PROTOCOL RANKING AMONG POLITBURO MEMBERS
PRESENT. HE APPEARED IN SAME POSITION DURING MAY
DAY DEMONSTRATION, LEADING US TO WONDER WHETHER
HE HAS SUFFERED RECENT POLITICAL DOWNTURN. BREZHNEV
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 15366 01 OF 02 011057Z

HAS MAINTAINED AN ACTIVE PACE RECENTLY. HIS
APPEARANCE AND PERFORMANCE HAVE BEEN WITHIN NORMAL
RANGE FOR HIM. WE EXPECT CC PLENUM EARLY NEXT WEEK,
POSSIBLY CONCENTRATING ON AGRICULTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. KULAKOV- UP, DOWN OR EVEN? TELEVISION COVERAGE OF
FUNERAL CEREMONIES FOR MSTISLAV KELDISH JUNE 29,

SHOWED FOLLOWING POLITBURO LINE-UP ON LENIN'S MAUSOLEUM: BREZHNEV, SUSLOV, KIRILENKO, GRISHIN, GROMYKO, USTINOV, ANDROPOV, KULAKOV. ALTHOUGH PRAVDA JUNE 30 DID NOT SHOW PHOTOGRAPH OF LEADERSHIP AND LISTED THEM IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER FOLLOWING BREZHNEV, WE THINK IT WORTH NOTING THAT KULAKOV ONCE AGAIN (AS AT MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS - REF A) FOUND HIMSELF STANDING LAST AMONG THE FULL POLITBURO MEMBERS. BY CONTRAST, ON MAY DAY 1977, KULAKOV WAS TO THE RIGHT OF (I.E., CLOSER TO BREZHNEV THAN) FELLOW POLITBURO MEMBERS GROMYKO, MAZUROV, PEL'SHE AND ANDROPOV (REF B). DURING 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN NOVEMBER 1977 (REF C) MAZUROV AND PEL'SHE HAD MOVED CLOSER TO BREZHNEV THAN KULAKOV, LEAVING ONLY GROMYKO AND ANDROPOV STANDING FARTHER FROM THE POSITION OF HONOR (I.E. BREZHNEV'S SPOT).

2. WE DID NOT AT FIRST ATTRIBUTE MUCH SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS, PARTICULARLY SINCE MEDIA COVERAGE OF KULAKOV'S 60TH BIRTHDAY SEEMED TO PLACE HIM AHEAD OF OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS IN THEIR 60'S IN TERMS OF POLITICAL PRESTIGE (REF D). KULAKOV'S SECOND CONSECUTIVE LOW PROTOCOL STANDING ON MAUSOLEUM, HOWEVER, GIVES US SOME PAUSE AND CAUSES US TO REMEMBER APPARENT RESERVE WITH WHICH BREZHNEV PRAISED HIM DURING FEBRUARY 9 AWARD CEREMONY (REF E).
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 15366 01 OF 02 011057Z

KULAKOV'S APPARENTLY LOWER RECENT STANDING MAY BE SIMPLY AN EFFORT TO REDRESS WHAT OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS SAW AS INFLATED ATTENTION PAID TO HIM EARLIER IN THE YEAR, REFLECTING A DESIRE THAT HE NOT APPEAR AS THE "HEIR APPARENT." IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS IN DEEPER POLITICAL TROUBLE BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, AN AREA OF HIS PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY. THE JULY 5 SUPREME SOVIET SESSION WILL GIVE US ANOTHER CHANCE TO OBSERVE KULAKOV'S PROTOCOL RANKING, SINCE IN RECENT SESSIONS HE HAS BEEN SEATED IN THE FRONT ROW OF THE LEADERSHIP.

3. BREZHNEV: ACTIVE AND COPING. BREZHNEV CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE PACE, INCLUDING IN RECENT DAYS MEETINGS WITH THE TURKISH PRIME MINISTER, THE PERUVIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT OF MADAGASCAR, AS WELL AS A MAJOR SPEECH AT MINSK. TELEVISION COVERAGE OF HIM MEETING PRESIDENT OF MADAGASCAR JUNE 29 SHOWED LENGTHY FOOTAGE OF HIM WALKING TO AND FROM PLANE. HE SEEMED TO BE MOVING CAREFULLY AND, AS USUAL, A BIT STIFFLY, BUT AT

NORMAL PACE AND WITHOUT ANY ABNORMAL SIGNS OF
FRAILITY. LEONID IL'ICH MADE A BRIEF THANK-YOU
SPEECH AFTER RECEIVING HIS PERUVIAN MEDAL JUNE 26 -
HIS VOICE SOUNDED THICK, AND HE SEEMED TO HAVE
TROUBLE CLEARING HIS THROAT, BUT THE BREVITY OF
HIS REMARKS (ABOUT TWO MINUTES) DID NOT ALLOW A
FULL JUDGMENT AS TO HIS CURRENT SPEAKING ABILITY.

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 15366 02 OF 02 011049Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 15366

4. POSSIBLE CC PLENUM. SUPREME SOVIET IS SCHEDULED
TO MEET JULY 5 AND WE EXPECT CC PLENUM TO CONVENE
PRIOR TO THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE USUAL PRACTICE.
MOSCOW RUMOR MILL HAS IT THAT AGRICULTURE IS TO BE
A MAJOR TOPIC AT MEETING, BUT WE HAVE NO HARD
EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM THAT. TOON

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